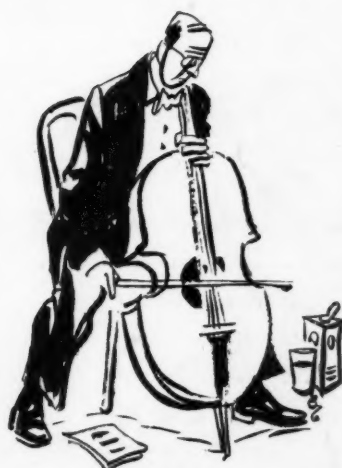


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# RECORD GUIDE



JULY, 1953 - VOL. 19, No. 11

Edited by

Peter Hugh Reed

**SINCE OTHERS KEEP TALKING ABOUT "AWARDS" FOR THE "BEST" OR THE "HIGH-FI-EST" WE THOUGHT YOU SHOULD BE LET IN ON THE NEWS. STRICTLY BETWEEN US "NOBODY" BUT "NOBODY" CAN MATCH THIS "RECORD"!**

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LL-130	PETROUCHKA (Stravinsky)	Grand Prix du Disque 1951
LL-144	BRANDENBURG CONCERTI Nos. 4 & 6 (Bach)	Grand Prix du Disque 1951
LL-194	GERARD SOUZAY CLASSIC AIRS	Grand Prix du Disque 1951
LS-598	AMARILLI (In Collection) — Suzanne Danco	Grand Prix du Disque 1951
LL-222	BRANDENBURG CONCERTI Nos. 1 & 5 (Bach)	Grand Prix du Disque 1951
LS-226	BRANDENBURG CONCERTI Nos. 2 & 3 (Bach)	Grand Prix du Disque 1951
LL-271	FOUR SERIOUS SONGS (Brahms) — Ferrier	Grand Prix du Disque 1952
LS-331	SYMPHONY OF PSALMS	Grand Prix du Disque 1951
LL-388	MA MERE L'OYE (Ravel)	Grand Prix du Disque 1952
LL-390	PETITE SYMPHONIE CONCERTANTE (Martin)	Grand Prix du Disque 1952
LL-462/3	LA BOHEME — Complete Recording (Puccini)	Grand Prix du Disque 1952
LL-598	THREE CORNERED HAT — Complete (Falla)	Grand Prix du Disque 1953
LL-624	GOOD HUMORED LADIES — Ballet (Scarlatti)	Grand Prix du Disque 1953
LL-603	SONATAS Nos. 10, 22, 24 (Beethoven) — Backhaus	Audio Engineering Award 1953

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# The American RECORD GUIDE

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## WHAT PRICE OLD RECORDS...

### Editorial

**DURING** the years, your editor has often been asked about the values of old records. Until recently, it was impossible to place a value on old discs, as prices varied with different dealers. Now, with the publication of Julian Morton Moses' *Price Guide to Collectors' Records* (available through the American Record Collectors' Exchange, 825 Seventh Ave., New York 19, N. Y., price \$2.50), the person who wishes to dispose of old acoustic 78-rpm records—single or double faced—can get an idea of prices that they might bring. Mr. Moses in his preface says "the values listed for each item are the average prices for original copies in good condition. They are not meant to reflect or to influence any given transaction."

Mr. Moses has long been a collector and connoisseur of old recordings—especially acoustic ones made by the great singers of the past. In the early days of this publication, before he entered the trade, he contributed articles on singers of the past and their recordings. Having dealt with the sales of such discs for many years, through the American Record Collectors' Exchange, Mr. Moses has been able to keep statistical data on prices, and through his own figures and his intimate knowledge of what others charged he has been able to arrive at the "average" price of an original copy of a disc in good condition. One might be tempted to believe that Mr. Moses has, more often than not, set a maximum price on various celebrity discs, but this July, 1953

he assures me is not the case. There have been higher sales of records, valued by Mr. Moses at \$5 or \$7 which would startle a lot of people if all the prices obtained were divulged. On the other hand, some of these same discs have been acquired at ridiculously low figures by those fortunate enough to find them in some shop where the owner had no idea of values.

It is our belief that the auctioneer has determined some of the values of old records, not the public barker but the mail auctioneers. With a large list of prospective buyers, such a dealer can always rely on the choice or rare records—with which the collectors have become increasingly aware in recent years—commanding higher prices through bids than they would otherwise.

There is no dishonesty in this type of public dealing, providing the condition of the records is truthfully stated. If one man thinks a certain item, quoted at \$5 in Mr. Moses' listing, is worth four or five times that amount to him, the auctioneer would be a poor business man to refuse his bid. In no way can he be accused of cheating the bidder, and it is doubtful if the bidder acquires a near perfect copy that he, even informed of the maximum price of a disc from knowledgeable past sales, would resent his payment. There are those who like to think that they have set the maximum figure of any art object.

There is a story told of a wealthy man who acquired six copies, in perfect con-

dition, of a recording by a famous prima donna whose products never sold well and were therefore limited to relatively small pressings. The particular record that he acquired was of an unfamiliar aria rather than a popular one. The particular singer in question (it is unfair to give her name) was hardly known in this country, though she enjoyed an enviable European reputation; yet, even in Europe, her recordings did not sell well. The man who acquired these six duplicate discs had many bids for his extra copies. Finally, he learned through one dealer that there were not more than one or two known copies in good condition of the recording in question beside his own.

Convinced that he had a real treasure, the wealthy collector got a brain-storm. Inviting a dozen jealous friendly collectors to a party at his home, he played the record in question (which one guest present was honest enough to admit later sounded atrocious to him) and then announced the price he had paid for his six copies and the prices that he had been offered and refused for his duplicates. Several guests offered to pay more for a copy. "No, gentlemen," he said, "I am not going to sell any of my duplicates which if you will carefully examine, you will find *are* in perfect condition. If there are only one or two perfect copies besides mine in existence, the value of the one copy I shall keep can be advanced by my disposing of the five duplicates in another way than by selling them." Taking the other five records off the table, he

went into another room. Shortly, he returned with an enigmatic smile on his face. "Gentlemen, I propose a toast to my *one* record, which is now a rare art object worth six times what it was five minutes ago; I just broke up the other five discs." Consternation prevailed, but plenty of champagne helped the situation. We are told the man in question keeps his "one record" in a safety deposit box and never plays it. Also, it is rumored, he is trying to acquire any other perfect copies of this disc in existence.

To this story, which we prefer to think may be exaggeration or pure myth, there is a sequel. The particular recording that the collector valued so highly was dubbed a month after his act of destruction by one of the record pirates, and the dubbed copy has been claimed better than the original by some collectors.

In recent years, a great many people have inherited among other things a collection of old records, or discovered in the cobwebbed corners of an old attic a stack of old Carusos, Melbas, and other early phonograph celebrities. Most wish to dispose of them, but they do not know their values. Now that Mr. Moses' *Price Guide* exists they have a lead on what a record in good condition can be sold for. But where and how? many ask. Well, that's another problem. The dealer in old records is notoriously ungenerous to the uninitiated, as well he may be if he's going to stay in business. It would have been interesting if Mr. Moses had given us minimum and maxi-

(Continued on page 369)

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A picture of  
Prokofiev taken  
about 20 years ago  
(Photo by Iris)

By Phil Hart

## Sergei Prokofiev

April 23, 1891 — March 8, 1953

**M**ORE THAN any other composer of our time, Sergei Prokofiev occupied at the time of his death a position difficult to assess. Had he remained, as did Stravinsky, in Western Europe and possibly in this country, instead of returning to Russia in 1934, he would undoubtedly have played a major role in contemporary music outside Russia during the past two decades. Instead, he spent this period in relative isolation from what we know as the mainstream of contemporary music. Yet we cannot simply write him off as another Soviet composer, shackled like Kabalevsky or Khatchaturian to a "line" of popular symphonic folklore, or stunted throughout his career by official pressures as Shostakovich has been.

The "exile" of Prokofiev from the center of contemporary musical activity is more than the mere geographically remote July, 1953

home he chose in 1944, for normal international intercourse would have kept him in touch closely with the outside world. But these have not been normal circumstances, and we shall never know the effect of Soviet ideological pressures upon one of the greatest musical geniuses of our time. For, before 1934, Prokofiev was firmly established as one of a handful of truly major figures in 20th-century music.

We can, of course, compare the music of Prokofiev before and after 1934 to discern the impact of ideological influence. But we can never know the works he was prevented from writing or which, once written, were suppressed, during what should have been the fruitful decades of his career.

The most devious musical result of Prokofiev's return to Russia was a rejection of the "modernistic" tendencies

of the mainstream of contemporary music. Both the Nazis and Soviets have had an official aversion to this music: the Nazis called it "cultural Bolshevism", the Soviets decadent intellectualism of Western cosmopolitanism.

Prokofiev's two *Violin Concertos* afford an excellent illustration of his non-Soviet and Soviet phases. The early *D major Concerto*, recorded by Szigeti and Beecham (ML 4533, a reissue), is very lyrical, but its melody is set in an extremely bright and dissonant texture. The melodies of the later *G minor Concerto*, still best represented in the record of Heifetz and Koussevitsky (LCT 8, a reissue), are more sentimental and popular in mood, and set in a richer and less dissonant background.

### The Piano Concertos

On records today we know Prokofiev mainly by his very early or very late works. Only recently have we had on records such important works as the *Fifth Piano Concerto*, composed immediately before the return to Russia. It closes a period of composition centering around Prokofiev's last ballet for Diaghilev, *L'Enfant Prodigue*. This composer had a way of borrowing material from one work for another, and for re-arranging his music for different occasions, in much the same way that Handel did. The ballet *L'Enfant Prodigue* is closely related in its material to other works such as the *Fourth Symphony* composed for the Boston Symphony's anniversary in 1930, and the *First String Quartet* commissioned by Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge.

The *Fifth Piano Concerto*, recorded adequately but not with overwhelming authority by Brendel and Sternberg in Vienna (Period 527), carries to extremes the highly characteristic piano style developed by Prokofiev through such better-known earlier works as the *Third Piano Concerto* and the toccata-like shorter pieces for solo piano. It is in five brief and rather simply-constructed movements, and represents a genuine juxtaposition of modern piano against the orchestra.

Among Prokofiev's earlier works cer-

tainly the best-known is the delightful *Classical Symphony in D*: choice of recording here rests on personal taste between Toscanini's X-ray treatment (LM 9020), and Koussevitsky's opulent sound (LM 1215), or Munch's broader tempos (LL 169). Far more characteristic of Prokofiev's early maturity is the *Violin Concerto in D* noted earlier, which is fully as "classical" as the *Symphony*, but far more idiomatic of Prokofiev.

Since his return to Russia, Prokofiev has succeeded admirably in writing "popular" symphonic pieces, as opposed to the purely ceremonial and political cantatas required for political favor; Prokofiev's efforts in the latter category are best dismissed quickly. But this composer has given us several lighter works of great charm and novelty.

*Peter and the Wolf* remains one of the most delightful "instructional" compositions ever written; none of the modern LPs matches the original freshness and just sufficient pomposity of the original record by Hale and Koussevitsky, but Rathbone and Stokowski (ML 4038, a reissue) are the best now available.

### Two Film Works

Two other popular works are derived from motion picture scores written during the 1930s: *Lieutenant Kije*, excellently recorded by Scherchen (WL 5091); and the *Cantata* from Eisenstein's patriotic film, *Alexander Nevsky*, superbly performed by Jennie Tourel, the Westminster Choir, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and Eugene Ormandy (ML 4247, a reissue).

From Prokofiev's most recent work, four compositions have been extremely well represented on LP—the *Fifth* and *Sixth Symphonies*, and the two *Violin Sonatas*. Both of the Symphonies are masterful large-scale works of great sonority, and a constructive skill encountered in no other major composer of the past two decades. They contain typical Prokofiev lyricism and sarcasm, constant factors in Prokofiev, which are here somewhat watered down with a theatrical rhetoric that prevents these two works from attaining first rank as

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major symphonies. The *Fifth* has been recorded by Rodzinski (ML 4037) and Koussevitsky (LM 1045), neither a new recording, but both are better performances than the Danish State Symphony under Tuxen (LL 672). The *Sixth* has been recorded by Ormandy (ML 4428) and Ansermet (LL 527). A *Seventh Symphony* recently introduced in New York and Philadelphia by Ormandy, has just been recorded.

The *Violin Sonatas* are, on the other hand, far more rewarding works, demonstrating that it was possible for Prokofiev to compose on occasion with complete musical integrity. Of the two, the *F minor* is the more personal in power and expression. The *D major* contains a strong element of Prokofievian mockery. Both are admirably recorded by Szigeti and appropriately coupled on one record (ML 4257); this coupling is preferable to that of Menuhin's performance of the *F minor* with Bartok's *Solo Violin Sonata* (LM 1087). Szigeti has also obtained the score of a very late *Sonata* for unaccompanied violin which he will probably record.

### Other LP Recordings

There are many other Prokofiev works in the LP catalogs, many of them given indifferent performances or poor recording. The Oistrakh performance of the *D major Violin Concerto*, for instance, is a fabulous account of the solo part played against an almost inaudible orchestra. The same is true of other Prokofiev records of Soviet origin.

Among the better LPs of Prokofiev's music, not already mentioned, are: Kapell's persuasive rendition of the *Third Piano Concerto* (LM 1058); the *String Quartet No 2* by the Hollywood Quartet (P-8151); the early *Scythian Suite* by either Ormandy (ML-4152) or Scherchen (the latter with *Lieutenant Kije*); and the various piano sonatas by Robert Cornman (LL-553), Pennario (P-8113), and Horowitz (LM-1016).

During the 1920s and early 1930s, Prokofiev concertized considerably in this country and Europe and was recognized as a highly competent performer.

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His piano playing was once represented in the RCA-Victor catalog by two very important albums which should be re-issued, perhaps all on one LP record. These are Prokofiev's own superb performance of the *Third Piano Concerto* (M 176), and a collection of miscellaneous piano solos (Victor M-477 or HMV 5030/3). The latter set was issued in a connoisseur list at the behest of our Editor, Mr. Reed, but enjoyed an all too brief availability in the Victor catalog.

No doubt Prokofiev's recent death will prompt considerable interest in his music by the recording companies. Certainly we should have his opera, *The Love of Three Oranges*, the ballet *L'Enfant Prodigue*, the *Fourth Symphony*, and a representation of the new opera *War and Peace*.

## Folksong Issues

**Turkish and Spanish Folksongs;** Cynthia Gooding. Elektra 10" LP 6, \$4.45. **Folksongs of Spain;** Germaine Montero. Vanguard 10" LP 70-01, \$4.75. **Songs of Canaan;** Hillel and Aviva, Concert Hall 10" LP 1171, \$4.45. **Voices of Haiti.** Elektra 10" LP 5, \$4.45.

▲THESE FOUR DISCS are a representative selection of what LP is doing for folk music. Cynthia Gooding's disc is a good example of the "concertized" folk singing which is more and more appearing on records. Six Turkish and seven Spanish songs are presented by this Minnesota-born contralto with a great deal of taste and apparent thought. One might quibble with the often modern-sounding harmonization of the guitar but the melody itself sounds authentic enough. The Vanguard disc has much less claim to authenticity, for these Spanish folksongs have apparently traveled through a good many hands before reaching those of Mme. Montero. These are really *café-concert* arrangements, complete with a "Spanish-style" orchestra (conducted by Salvador Bacarisse), and



the music does not often betray its origin. Her voice however is really remarkable, and this, I suppose, is why the record got the *Grand Prix du Disque* last year. She has that rarest of all qualities, a really vulgar delivery, tempered by an exquisite tone. Something in the style of Dania or Yvonne George, though not *that* vulgar.

The Israeli folksingers, Hillel and Aviva, also tend to concertize their material but this does not really interfere with the exquisitely pastoral music they sing and play. With twelve folksongs, old and new, they present a quite authentic sounding program, except when they play for laughs, as in the last number. The *Voices of Haiti* disc, however, is that rarest of LP items, the on-the-spot discing of spontaneous music making, and it certainly is the best disc of the four listed. Recorded by Maya Deren—known mainly for her extremely original experimental films—it is a faithful transcription of Voodoo ritual dances and it makes some of the most exciting listening to come our way for some time.

The recordings of these discs vary. By far the best is the Deren disc which has a very real sound to it. All the others are competent jobs however. —D.R.

## Opera of Yesterday

**ROSSINI:** *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; Riccardo Stracciari (Figaro), Dino Borgioli (Il Conte d'Almaviva), Salvatore Baccaloni (Dott. Bartolo), Mercedes Capsir (Rosina), others, La Scala Chorus, Milan Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli. Entré LP set E-1, 3 discs, \$11.25.

**VERDI:** *Rigoletto*; Riccardo Stracciari (Rigoletto), Dino Borgioli (Duke), Mercedes Capsir (Gilda), others, La Scala Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli. Entre LP set, 2 discs, \$7.57.

▲COLUMBIA turns back time a quarter of a century, permitting us to hear and estimate the qualities of operatic singing on records of another era. The transfer to LP has been expertly handled, all

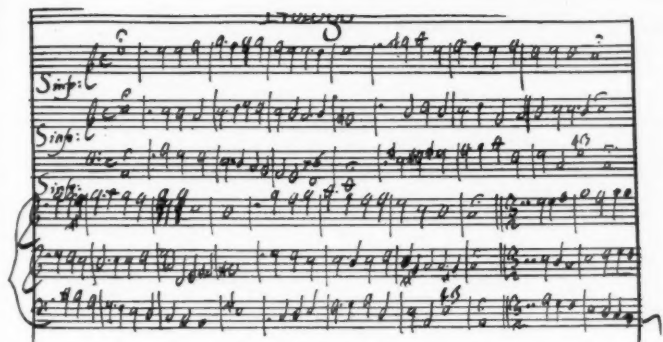
things considered. Evidently it was not possible to rid the orchestral reproduction of its excessively heavy and muddled bass reproduction (if you have a 300 bass turnover, resort to it as it helps considerably). The singers are as lifelike and true as they were in the original 78s, with the exception that much of the shrillness (which was a former drawback, in my estimation) of Miss Capsir's high voice is removed. Of Spanish extraction, this singer's voice is often white and penetrating on the high end though extremely flexible and absolutely true to pitch. Hers is a highly skilled artistry though her singing is not always the most appealing.

Stracciari was the intended attraction of both sets when originally issued. He was then in his middle fifties. His Figaro is consistently better than his Rigoletto; he makes much of his characterization of the Barber, using many liberties with the ingenuity of a veteran trouper. The role of Rigoletto apparently taxed his vocal resources for sometimes his voice sounds tired. Borgioli's Count is sung with fine style and vocal ease; it is by far the best performance of the role on records. In many ways this *Barber* is the best on records. Its three principals are to be preferred to Becchi, de los Angeles and Monti. Taddei and Simionatto in the Cetra set, however, are equally as appealing to me as Stracciari and Capsir. In the case of Rosina, it is a matter of whether one prefers the original mezzo-soprano version or the more sophisticated coloratura soprano version. Baccaloni, as Bartolo, reminds us he was once a fine singer rather than an operatic clown.

Borgioli and Capsir are both excellent in *Rigoletto*, though I must say her Gilda suggests a more sophisticated character than Erna Berger's recent one. As for Rigoletto himself, Leonard Warren is vocally and dramatically more compelling than Stracciari. Borgioli, on the other hand, is a more youthful and ardent Duke than Peerce. In their price category, these sets have no serious competition. —P.H.R.

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Sinfonia dell'Incoronazione di Poppea.

Autografo di Monteverdi.

## A 17th-Century Operatic Masterpiece

**MONTEVERDI:** *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (Opera in 3 Acts); Sylvia Gaehwiler (Poppea); Friedrich Brueckner-Rueggeberg (Nerone), Maria Helbing (Ottavia), Mabella Ott-Penetto (Ottone), others, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, Chorus, Walter Goehr (conductor). Concert Hall Society LP set 1184, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲ **MONTEVERDI'S** *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* is his greatest operatic achievement, the crowning glory of his last years. It has been edited by several musicians in modern times, notably by Malipiero. The present edition by Walter Goehr, which aims to be "a more compact presentation for a modern audience," is no more successful than d'Indy's and some others I have heard. I still favor Malipiero's. Be that as it may, Goehr has accomplished a practical adoption for recording purposes, one which logically unfolds the plot. One must concede that Goehr's was a labor of love which should pay off better than most others with this perpetuated performance.

The reproduction of this set is realistic without aiming for ultra high-fidelity. The balance between singers and in-

strumental ensemble is effectively contrived and the old instruments used, while not manifesting themselves too broadly, create a proper atmosphere.

The performance does not rise to the expectations I have had for many years in regard to this opera. But to understand why this is the case, one should consider Monteverdi's intentions and his unexcelled artistry in dramatic characterization.

While Monteverdi's *Orfeo* belongs in the realistic realm of opera—an innovation in its time by a born genius—it is far more florid and classical than his *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. I doubt that the Italians of Monteverdi's day used the term *verismo*, which a later generation of Italians applied to Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* and other realistic melodramas, but for Monteverdi's time *L'Incoronazione* was assuredly *verismo* without the obvious melodrama into which librettists and composers degenerated toward the end of the 19th century. He had written his *Orfeo* in his thirties, but it was not until his seventy-fifth year that he penned *L'Incoronazione*. In both he sought for truthful characterization, but

only the latter permitted him to achieve the greater realization inasmuch as the immoral plot—Nero's repudiation of his wife Octavia and the enthronement of the ambitious Poppea in her place—allowed musical dramatization which the classical *Orfeo* did not. (What a pity the score of *Arianna* did not survive; it might reveal another equally fascinating facet of the composer's genius, for certainly the surviving *Lamento* with its tragic implications suggests much.)

### A First Hearing

Exactly twenty years ago, the late Paul Rosenfeld and myself attended a performance of five scenes of *L'Incoronazione*, given by operatic pupils of the Juilliard School in New York. This was at a time when I had just returned from Italy after much conference with Malipiero, Monteverdi's foremost 20th-century, spokesman and proselytizer on the merits of the latter composer. Recordings of Monteverdi's works were then scarce though I had acquired the Italian recordings of his Madrigal-Sestina *Lagrime d'amante al sepolcro dell'amata* sung by the Cantori Bolognesi, and some other madrigals sung by the La Scala Chorus. Paul Rosenfeld's initiation into the character and qualities of Monteverdi's work was derived from these recordings. How greatly he was impressed and what he thought of the composer was told in an article he wrote for *The New Republic* after hearing the amateur performance of scenes from *L'Incoronazione*.

Writing of the realism at the beginning of the third, Stygian, act of *Orfeo*, Rosenfeld went on to point out: "Yet this realism again proved itself neither illustrative nor cheaply veristic. As in *L'Incoronazione*, all the pictorial and dramatic characteristics showed themselves part and parcel of musical shapes born of the whole melody and rhythm of the pieces in which they figured." He spoke at length upon the audacity of Monteverdi's harmony, "its abrupt succession of minor chords with major and equally abrupt transitions from the major to the minor again; just as another is the freedom of his rhythms. . . and

still another the daring use of appoggiaturas which anticipates—precisely as the poet's triumphant hymn to his lyre in the fourth act of *Orfeo* forestalls the pompous music of Monteverdi's younger contemporary Lulli, and of Purcell and Handel, and the delicious scene of the page and the damsel in *L'Incoronazione*—the stunning appoggiaturas of Debussy and Stravinsky, his junior by three centuries." Comparing Monteverdi with Wagner, Moussorgsky and Debussy in their search for truth, Rosenfeld ends up by stating that Moussorgsky "is always truthful, as uniformly as Monteverdi, and as nobly indifferent as he to any mere theatrical effectiveness and virtuosic display. But Moussorgsky is sometimes a hampered technician, Monteverdi never, for all the circumscription of his means. Thus in his patrician raiment the old Cremonese—least superficial of all the Italians subsequent to Michelangelo—seemed ever to loom potentially ahead as in the proscenium arch of the theatre, the prince of all those who have held the mirror of realistic music up to god-nature as it burns in man: such by virtue of what I at last had to recognize as one of the freest, broadest, noblest contacts with it ever achieved by a composer—a deep, mature, entirely certain and undeluded feeling of creative Nature, and a proud glory in her actuality."

### Words That Live

Few today have the gift for spinning words today like Paul Rosenfeld. It is a day in which bluntness and critical heroism prevails. Yet, it seems to me a man like Rosenfeld speaks forcefully and imaginatively about a composer of long ago whom modern listeners are beginning to realize is deserving of performance. The listener living with a recorded work by this modern genius of another day cannot fail to become impressed with repeated performances in his truthful characterization, his feeling for the expressiveness of poetry and his accomplished dramatic presentation in which the craft of the technician is skillfully concealed.

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One cannot but be grateful to all participants in this recording of *L'Incoronazione* for their efforts to make the presentation live, which it does though only after a fashion. The listener who takes time to read the text and follow the performance with same can hardly fail to realize that there is more expressive drama in Monteverdi's art than is realized here. I have a feeling that these singers, mostly of Swiss origin, I believe, are not accomplished Italian conversationalists, nor aware of the intensity of the language which is faithfully conveyed in Monteverdi's music. They do manage to convey some of the emotionalism and at least they sing pleasantly for this day and age, though some are no more than adequate.

The Poppea is blessed with a lovely voice but she fails to convey the true ambitiousness of the character. Hers is a sweet-voiced Poppea, an attribute for which one can be thankful. The Nero is an admirable stylist, yet his voice is rather slight for a true characterization. Octavia is good, though lacking in intensity, and Ottone—Poppea's discarded husband, whom Nero banishes—is in character insofar as it is possible for a woman to be in character in a male role. The part was evidently intended for a *castro* in Monteverdi's time. Walter Goehr is a competent guiding spirit, but he lacks the ardor of the Italian soul; discretion is the better part of valor with him. But this is to be praised, for any ardor of his unshared by the cast would make for inconsistency. The old saying about looking a gift horse in the face is brought to mind. As a long-time admirer of *L'Incoronazione*, I am most grateful for this recorded performance, which suggests far better artistic preparation than any stage performance I have heard to date, and since it is doubtful that another recording will materialize in the near future I expect to enjoy the present one more as time goes onward. It is the way I feel about Monteverdi's *Vespro*, reviewed last month. But at least in this instance we have better reproduction and better artists. —P.H.R.

July, 1953

## Some Folk Releases from Government Files

### FOLK MUSIC OF THE UNITED STATES:

Available at \$4.50 the disc from the Recording Laboratory of the Library of Congress, Washington, 25, D. C. Catalogue, 10 cents, in coin.

▲WASHINGTON'S Library of Congress, Division of Music, has probably the finest collection of American folk music materials in the world. Some years ago much of this material was made available to the public on 78's. Now, with the advent of LP all of this material will soon be available on microgroove plus more which were formerly not available. The real virtue of this lies in the fact that—unlike so much commercially recorded folk material—the performance is complete authentic. Folk artists like Alan Lomax, Sam Eskin and Aubrey Snyder took recording apparatus out into the field and there captured immortal records of American folk music in its own milieu, sung by those—sailors, cowboys, housewives and farmers—to whom it was an everyday part of living, like setting the table or plowing the north field. In the two discs comprising *American Sea Songs and Shanties* (AAFS L26 and 27) for example, much of the recording was done at Snug Harbor. The *Cowboy Songs and Ballads* (AAFS L28) were actually recorded on the plains or in the homes of Texas and the far West. The *Songs and Ballads of American History* (AAFS L29) includes everyone from itinerant North Carolina fiddlers to Judge Learned W. Hand. For the *Songs of the Mormons* disc (AAFS L30), recording equipment was taken to Salt Lake City and Brigham City in Utah.

These absolutely unique documents will not only form the cornerstone of any folk-music collection but are also capable of giving the straightforward listening pleasure which comes with the completely authentic. The recordings, so far mostly dubbings, vary in sounds,

as might be expected from the necessarily primitive recording technique used, but one does not look for phonographic perfection in these discs and their virtues far transcend the occasional lack of balance and the sometimes noisy surface. Here, thanks to the judgment and editing of Duncan B. M. Emrich one may hear, as did Whitman, "America singing."

—D.R.

## Sacred Works by Handel

**HANDEL:** *St. John Passion*; Kathryn Harvey (soprano), Gertrud Pitzinger (contralto), Ernst Haeflinger (tenor) Derek Olsen (basso), Heinz Wehrle (organ), Annemarie Wehrle (harpsichord) and Bach Choir of Zurich with Winterthur Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bernhard Henking. Handel Society LP set HDL 16, two discs, \$11.90.

▲ACCORDING to Chrysander the *St. John Passion* is the earliest surviving Handel work, dating from 1704 when the nineteen-year-old composer was in Hamburg. James Lyons' notes make it clear that the Handel Society has not been slavishly purist in making this recording, for the revised orchestration of Ernst Hess has been used. It should be added, however, that the editor has done nothing very drastic to the score, but has interpolated a few pages from the *Brookes Passion* of 1716, and the libretto as here sung is at some variance with that in the Handel Gesellschaft score. Thus we have an introductory chorus somewhat in the manner of Schuetz and Bach, and an interesting solo and chorus midway in one of the recitatives, strongly reminiscent of the Leipzig master with its "Kommst—Wohin?—nach Golgatha."

It will be seen that this work would have its fascination even were there nothing in its own music to recommend it, for it offers the most striking contrast with the passions of Schuetz and Bach. The ground plan and the general handling are similar, yet the musical style and texture are different. If it never rises to the dramatic heights or the expressive stature

of Bach, remember the composer was only starting his career when he wrote it.

The performance has vitality and is technically and musically proficient, though it does not remain consistently on its own highest level. The choral parts are sung with assurance and good clarity. Of the soloists the men show up better than the women. The soprano shoots rather widely in some of her passages, and the contralto, who is called upon to impersonate Pilate, drives her voice, perhaps for purposes of characterization. The tenor has a good round and solid tone and delivers his lines with admirable understanding. The bass, contending with cruelly difficult music, acquits himself with considerable credit. The recording has clarity and solid tone if not much atmosphere. The soloists are all rather close upon us.

—P.L.M.

**HANDEL:** *Chandos Anthems, No. 6, Psalm 42, As pants the hart; No. 11, Psalm 68, Let God arise*; Dora van Doorn (soprano), Annie Woud (contralto), Leo Larsen (tenor), David Hollestelle (basso), and Netherlands Handel Society Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Jack Looij. Bach Society LP HDL 17, \$5.95.

▲THESE two anthems may be taken as a sample of a rich and little-known treasury of choral music. As is pointed out in the jacket liner, these are not run-of-the-mill English anthems, but rather something akin to the cantatas of Bach, with choral and solo movements alternating in well-calculated contrast. The orchestra employed is not a big one, but thanks to Handel's writing it is sonorous and this composer's choruses always sound magnificent.

In both cases represented here Handel reworked the text several times over, and in both instances the first version is presented. The first of the two, being a warm and human Psalm, is the more direct and ingratiating work, rather the less elaborate in conception. *Psalm 68* is festive in character.

(Continued on page 390)

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# Record Notes and Reviews

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THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

## Orchestra

**ALBENIZ** (arr. Arbós): *Iberia*; George Sebastian conducting l'Orchestre de l'Association des Concerts Colonne. Urania LP 7085, \$5.95.

▲AT LONG LAST, we have a complete recording of the five piece suite that the late Enrique Fernández Arbós arranged from Albeniz's twelve piano pieces in which he glorified the Spanish musical atmosphere in a strikingly original and wholly persuasive manner. The five pieces are *Evocation*, *La Fête-Dieu à Séville*, *Triana*, *El Puerto* and *El Albaicín*. Each evokes an impression sometimes pictorial as in the *Seville Fête*, which vividly portrays the Iberian scenes. While these pieces are most successful on the piano, Arbos in transcribing them for the modern orchestra has made them more vividly realistic and colorful. I am reminded of what Ravel did for Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and I only wish that Arbos had transcribed all twelve pieces for, as the annotator says: "Arbos has not so much 'arranged' Albeniz, as fulfilled the intentions that could only be suggested on the piano."

The recording is excellent, though it would have profited with more "atmos-

phere" on the high end. Mr. Sebastian's performances are highly competent but lacking in the subtleties and ardor which Arbos himself brought to his interpretations of this music. But Arbos was to the manner born and he lived the music while Sebastian, who may or may not have been in contact with their local atmosphere, interprets it as an honest musician from another sphere of existence. He does not quite convey the intricate rhythmic subtleties in the true Spanish manner, but his performances are welcome nonetheless.

—P.H.R.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Overtures* — Egmont, Op. 84, *Leonore No. 2*, Op. 72a, *Prometheus*, Op. 43, *Fidelio*, Op. 72b, *Consecration of the House*, Op. 124; Felix Weingartner conducting the Vienna Philharmonic, the London Symphony and the London Philharmonic Orchestras. Columbia LP ML-4647, \$5.45.

▲IT IS surprising how much realism there is in these recordings, which date back to the 1930s. There are many excellent modern recordings of these overtures which I admire, but being one who likes to vary performances of Beethoven between different conductors—one of which is Weingartner—I am glad to have this LP disc of some formerly favorite 78 rpm performances. —P.H.R.

**BEEETHOVEN:** *Egmont, Coriolan, Prometheus* and *Leonore No. 3 Overtures*; the Vienna State Philharmonia conducted by Jascha Horenstein. Vox LP PL 8020, \$5.95.

▲THE overture business used to be the mainstay of the recorded repertory. Microgroove has proved anathema to such short classics. Collections like this one are about the only answer and lots of them keep turning up. There is little to be said in criticism because the customer clearly gets his money's worth no matter the slight variations of program (you can find *Fidelio*, the other *Leonores* and the *Consecration of the House* in other omnibus recordings). Four overtures in a row are too much for some people and not enough for others. To each his own. The performances here are quite adequate and the sound is relatively spacious.

—J.L.

**BEEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125*; Herbert von Karajan conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the Choral Society of the Friends of Music, Vienna, with Elisabeth Schwartzkopf, Elisabeth Hoengen, Julius Patzak, and Hans Hotter; and *Symphony No. 8 in F, Op. 93*; Same Orchestra and conductor. Columbia Entre LP set EL-51, 2 discs, \$5.96.

▲IF THE recording were comparable to the Toscanini and Kleiber issues, this would be terrific competition at its price. The English have had this set since 1943, priced much higher, and it has sold well. Those who desire to acquire an excellent LP version of the *Ninth* at a reasonable figure are cautioned to decrease the heavily loaded bass—a turnover of 300 cps is best. As recording quality goes, this is representative of its period (c. 1947-48) and like many of the older Vienna Philharmonic recordings far too reverberant in the middle and low sections for cleanness and clarity of inner lines. This excessive reverberation tends to create too much back-echo, and naturally causes tonal muddle. Commercial equipment which permits a decrease in bass may best serve the listener.

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This performance of the *Ninth* definitely proves von Karajan as one of today's outstanding interpreters of Beethoven. The "poise in power" of his first movement reveals his assurance, and the motivating inspiration of the last movement is as much an incentive of the conductor and his excellent ensemble as of the composer. The only drawback to this movement is the rough singing of Hotter—the other singers and the chorus are excellent. The *Scherzo* fails to come off well due to the reverberation which upsets the rhythmic clarity. In the slow movement, von Karajan does not evoke the beauty in poise and the mystery of Toscanini's performance. Ever since von Karajan came to Vienna in January 1946, he has been recognized as one of the foremost conductors in Europe. He created a sensation at his first concert. Furtwaengler returned to Vienna in 1947 and since that time there has been great rivalry between him and von Karajan with zealous adherents for each conductor. The recording of the *Eighth* is not quite as live and realistic as the *Ninth*, but the performance is an excellent one.

—P.H.R.

**BLOCH:** *Concerto Grosso*; **SCHUMAN:** *Symphony for Strings*; William Steinberg conducting the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Capitol LP S-8212, \$5.72.

▲IN NOVEMBER of 1952, the first Pittsburgh International Contemporary Music Festival was held. These performances were part of the festival. Capitol, I believe, has recorded others. The recordings were made at actual performances with wonderfully realistic effects, and a surprisingly quiet audience which is only intimated in a cough in the symphony. Steinberg's performance of the Bloch work is even more auspicious than the Kubelik one which was rightfully praised in its time. Steinberg's more incisive treatment and expressive feeling explores the Bloch milieu better than any one I have heard. William Schuman's symphony is prevailingly cerebral in its outer movements; only his

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*Larghissimo* suggests an inner emotional urge and remains the most satisfying section of the work, beautiful in string quality and expansive in sound. Both as a recording and a performance, this remains a finer tribute to its composer than the earlier Concert Hall release. —P.H.R.

**BRAHMS:** *Academic Festival Overture, Tragic Overture, Variations on a Theme by Haydn*; Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam conducted by Eduard van Beinum. London LP disc LL-735, \$5.95.

▲A WARM, clean recording that misses being outstanding. It lacks some of the tonal solidity and impact one associates with Brahms' weighty fortissimo tutti. The playing is, however, expert and the readings of uncommon steadiness, strength and grace. There is, in addition, unusual fidelity to the composer's indications. There will be some listeners who will complain about a certain lack of personality to the whole undertaking, but this is nevertheless a most useful collection of Brahms' orchestral works (other than the symphonies). I must add that the last inch of the *Tragic Overture* is quite gritty, at least on my review copy. —C.J.L.

**BRAHMS:** *Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68*; Hermann Scherchen conducting the Vienna State Opera Orchestra. Westminster LP WL-5189, \$5.95.

▲IT IS very likely that those who are dominated by imposing quality of sound will find this recording the most satisfying of all the Brahms' *First* versions, but while evaluating its clarity of tone and fidelity on the high end and its substantial basses the listener may not fully appreciate the fact that its scale of dynamics is far more persuasive than any other. Here, we have lovely pianissimos as well as full fortissimos and a true orchestral presence—a happy semblance of the concert hall sound heard on well balanced, extended range equipment.

There is the nobility of tradition as  
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well as eloquence in this performance. It is evident that Brahms evokes imaginative powers in the conductor for there is more than a suggestion that he has lived in affection with this work through long years. His is a true feeling for the Teutonic romanticism in the symphony with full understanding of its propulsive dramatic qualities. More than anyone else, Scherchen makes the listener realize the importance of the bass in Brahms. I am not forgetting the recent performance of this work by Toscanini, which I admire a great deal, but here is a performance closer to the German traditions that also captures my esteem. —P.H.R.

**CHERUBINI:** *Symphony in D major*; **BEETHOVEN:** *Septet in E flat, Op. 20*; Arturo Toscanini conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor LP LM-1745, \$5.72 (also 45 rpm set).

▲BACK in August 1949, when a Deutsche Grammophon recording of Cherubini's symphony was released, I remarked that of all performances of this work Toscanini's was the most compelling. The Italian maestro gives an incisive and vital performance, substantiating the drama in the music's classical austerity which others fail to do. Though Beethoven rated Cherubini as the greatest of his contemporaries, he has by and large become buried in history. Of his orchestral music, only one or two overtures have survived in the concert hall and this symphony, written in 1815 for the Philharmonic Society of London. There is in Cherubini's music a formality that approaches the ceremonial. His emotion is more public than private, as though it were governed by an official occasion rather than especial creative urges within himself. There is strength and dignity to this work, though it was made to order, which Toscanini fully substantiates.

Coupling the Cherubini—which might not attract the many on its own—with Beethoven's *Septet* was a smart idea, for anyone who has heard Toscanini's performance of the latter—a work long dear to his heart—would want his recording



of it. While it was originally designed for seven instruments, the orchestral version has always seemed right and proper, substantiating the nobility of the music which Toscanini does far better than anyone else I have heard. The recording of both these compositions are fine examples of Victor's modern engineering, wide-ranged but not strident on the upper end. Some clicks at the start of the Cherubini were disturbing and the quality of the Beethoven lessens toward the label.

—P.H.R.

**GLAZUNOV:** *Symphony No. 7 in F major, Op. 27*; Radio Berlin Orchestra conducted by Felix Lederer; **MIA-SKOVSKY:** *Lyric Concertino in G major, Op. 32, No. 3*; same orchestra conducted by Adolf Fritz Guhl. Urania 7088, \$5.95.

▲THE GLAZUNOV symphony, written in 1902, is an extremely fine piece of music. It certainly lends weight to the theory that the composer is one of the most unjustly neglected of all Russian composers. Subtitled by others the *Pastoral*, it opens with a really delightful *allegro*, very reminiscent of the lovely *Seasons* ballet music. The *scherzo*, an *allegro giocoso*, is one of the most inventive pieces of music the composer ever wrote—it rivals Tchaikovsky in sheer ingenuity of musical material and the sustaining of that most difficult of all musical moods: the frivolous. Lederer, new to discs in this country, turns in a completely admirable performance. He quite apparently knows the score is a really good one. The recording, like most Uranias, has a low volume level, otherwise it is very fine.

Those who know Miaskovsky through only his ubiquitous *Symphony No. 24* and his lacrymose *Violin Concerto* will be pleasantly surprised by the *Lyric Concertino*. Written in 1927, this lightly textured work is most pleasant to listen to. Full of gay little tunes and four-square rhythms it yet maintains a definite feeling for the *concertante*. Guhl reinforces this with the lightest of touches. Again the recording is quite good.

—D.R.

**HAYDN:** *Symphony No. 7 in C ("Le Midi")* and *Symphony No. 45 in F sharp minor ("The Farewell")*; Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia LP disc ML-4673, \$5.45.

▲A RECORDING of warmth and fullness enhances the exquisite playing by the great Philadelphia Orchestra of two enjoyable Haydn symphonies. Ormandy's reading of *Le Midi*, an early score written in 1761 and one of three entitled with times of day, is even better here than it was when New Yorkers first encountered it two seasons ago. It is clear, well balanced, and clearly proportioned, and sweet and manly of expression. An excess of heaviness in the bass during the first movement seems to be its only quarrel with historical style and good taste. This work is written in the *concerto grosso* style, is in four movements with a separate recitative introducing the second. The concertino, by the way, consists of two violins and one cello.

The popular *Farewell Symphony* is performed very well indeed, but I have never thought that Haydn's device at the end of the work of having the orchestral players retire from the stage one by one and two by twos is as interesting to the ear as it is to the eye. Prince Paul Esterhazy would surely not so quickly have got the point that his court musicians were unhappy if he had listened to the symphony's first performance with his eyes closed.

—C.J.L.

**HAYDN:** *Symphony No. 44 in E minor (Trauer)*; *Symphony No. 49 in F minor (La Passione)*; Hermann Scherchen conducting the Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera. Westminster LP WL-5206, \$5.95.

▲BOTH of these symphonies are on LP, but in the case of the *Trauer* neither the performance nor the recording compares to the present issue. The more mature musicality of Scherchen makes one realize what a wonderful symphony the *Trauer* is—a work which, Geiringer tells us, laments the death of a hero in its slow movement.

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"Haydn wanted its beautiful adagio in which the dramatic impetus of the first and last movements is replaced by a gentle expression of grief, to be played at his own funeral service." Where the youthful Sternberg aimed for forthright musical honesty, unsupported by experience, Scherchen phrases with full understanding of the expressive qualities of the music and the dynamic gradations. The *La Passione* obtains its nickname from its second movement also. One would be interested to know what stirred Haydn's fervent, almost restless emotion here. The movement is not as long as the lamentative slow section of the *Trauer*. The first, the true slow movement, is the longest—a contemplative movement which is beautifully detailed by Scherchen. Indeed, his performance of the whole symphony is more expressive than the previous ones, and better recorded too. Haydn fans will do well to acquire this disc.

—J.N.

**MOZART:** *Contre-Taenze, Nos. 1-5;*

*Adagio for cor Anglais, 2 violins and cello, K. 580a; Adagio in B flat, K. 440a* (2 clarinets and 2 bassethorns); Karl Haas conducting the London Baroque Ensemble. Decca 10" LP 4055, \$2.50.

▲HERE IS one of the most attractive 10" LP Mozart programs in existence, excellently recorded. The performances, under the highly skilled direction of Karl Haas, are most praiseworthy. The *Country Dances* need no comment, though I might say that Haas's incisive treatment is especially gratifying. The two *Adagios* may come under the heading of *Gebrauchsmusik* but they are assuredly diverting pieces with their special scoring. Mozarteans will not wish to miss this disc, which others will do well to investigate.

—P.H.R.

**PROKOFIEV:** *Symphony No. 7, op.*

*131; Lieutenant Kijé Suite, op. 60;* the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Efrem Kurtz, respectively. Columbia LP ML 4683, \$5.45.

▲WHAT'S in a name? It has been only a short few weeks since the American *première* of Prokofiev's last symphony, and already it is in the record catalogues. Further hearings may justify this prompt fealty, which is to say that time may lend to this music the substance it does not vouchsafe on short acquaintance. One suspects not. Whether Prokofiev was bowing to his reactionary critics or poking fun at their dialectics the listener is invited to conjecture. In truth, perhaps, he had nothing more to say; surely he says little in this innocuous work. As a swan song it falls far short of the promise its predecessors had foretold. One has only to reverse this disc for proof. The *Lieutenant Kijé* of two decades ago still is the masterpiece it ever was. The *Seventh* is performed definitively by Ormandy and his forces, and the recorded sound is sumptuous. The same cannot be said for its coupling here. The *Kijé* has been performed more persuasively and recorded far better by Scherchen.

—J.L.

**RESPIGHI:** *The Pines of Rome; The Fountains of Rome;* Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra conducted by Anton Dorati. Mercury LP MG-50011, \$5.95.

▲MERCURY'S engineers have really done wonders in capturing the tone and quality of the Minneapolis Symphony. These scores have provided them with the opportunity of achieving not only orchestral presence but also solo instrumental presence in a way that is most impressive. There is beauty in sound which is characteristic of the orchestra in the hall, and an overall clarity that delights the ear. But for all the realism in sound there is not quite the instrumental splendor and vividness of tonal quality which Respighi contrived in various parts of these scores, and which are found in Quadri's recent issue of both works (Westminster 5167) and de Sabata's issue of *The Fountains* (Victor LM-1067). The test in sound is at the beginning of the *Trilon Fountain* which somehow misses the tonal vividness in this recording for all its tonal beauty.

Moreover, Dorati's treatment of these scores is lacking in the forthright and more incisive treatment of de Sabata and Toscanini who, in my estimation, have proved to be the best spokesmen for Respighi's brilliant orchestra shows. It takes a virtuoso of the baton to make virtuoso music like this live auspiciously.

—P.H.R.

**STRAUSS, Joh.:** *Voices of Spring Waltz*; Ferenc Fricsay conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra with Wilma Lipp (soprano); *Tales from the Vienna Woods*; Ferdinand Leitner conducting the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra with Rudy Knabl (zither). Decca 10" LP DL-4041, \$2.50.

▲THERE IS plenty of realism in both recordings. Tonally the Berlin Philharmonic is more substantial in sound but the Bamberg Symphony is well enough balanced. Fricsay is closest to the Viennese spirit but his performance is not an orchestral show; rather it is a singer's. Wilma Lipp's lovely soprano voice floats over the orchestra with the utmost ease. Those who like the Strauss waltzes with a vocal obbligato, even though not always relevant, will like this version. Miss Lipp is not the virtuoso doing a stunt calculated to register high on an applause meter, but a musician with the equipment to realize successfully her assignment. While Leitner does not have the true Viennese lilt, his *Tales from the Vienna Woods* with Knabl's well played zither solos is enjoyable in its authenticity of performance.

—P.H.R.

**STRAUSS:** *Aus Italien, Op. 16*; Symphony Orchestra of Radio Berlin conducted by Arthur Rother. Urania LP 7087, \$5.95.

▲STRAUSS' *Italian Fantasy*, dating from his twenty-second year, has been scoffed at as "a musical Baedeker," but actually it remains a group of three tone "impressions" plus a wild fantastic finale based on Denza's popular song *Funiculi, funicular*, which Strauss heard at twenty-one while on a trip to Italy and got the

idea that it was a folksong. The lady annotator for the present disc gives Arditi credit for writing *Funiculi, funicular*; Strauss would have enjoyed that one. He too did not know about Denza until after his composition had been played in public.

Westminster issued a recording of this work some years ago by Swoboda and the Vienna Symphony. While that earlier issue had attributes of realism in its reproduction, this new one has more clarity. Rother's performance is on the whole better ordered than Swoboda and he certainly shows a better sense of preparation for climaxes, but neither he nor Swoboda are imaginatively stirred by the dreams and wild gaiety of a young composer.

In the lovely lyrical Andante, *On the Shores of Sorrento*, Rother's orchestra gives the best account of itself, and in the finale it is less rough than the Vienna Symphony. But neither conductor, in my estimation, creates the wild gaiety that should prevail. Those who already own the earlier disc will hardly feel inclined to change it, but those wishing to become acquainted with the first of Strauss' programmatic works might do well to hear both records before buying.

—P.H.R.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36*; Ferenc Fricsay conducting the RIAS Symphony Orchestra of Berlin. Decca LP DL-9680, \$5.95.

▲THIS MAKES a round dozen LP versions of this symphony. The recording emanating from Deutsche Grammophon is realistic, exceptional clear in detail with a fine gradation of dynamics. Fricsay's Tchaikovsky performances are especially appealing to me for their rhythmic fluency and grace. His technical dependability and clean phrasing in his performances of both the *Fourth* and *Fifth Symphonies*, his avoidance of forcing expression and allowing the lyrical lines to float easily—his woodwinds float high above the orchestra (probably as much an attribute of the hall where the orchestra performs and of good engineering as

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of the conductor's doing)—make his renditions among the most livable ones on record. In the opening and closing movements of the *Fourth* there is a rhythmic flow and bounce which no one else quite achieves. Of the dozen issues of the *Fourth*, Fricsay, Scherchen and Kubelik with their superior recording technique are the best. Of the dozen issues of the *Fifth*, Kletzki and Fricsay are interpretatively more persuasive to my ears, though Dorati and Cantelli, as I recall, got the best reproduction. To label one performance as the best is to mislead a listener; it becomes essential that several records be recommended, thus allowing the listener to select that which satisfies

his own ears as well as temperament. Those, who can afford it, should have more than one recording of works like this, otherwise they become "ear-conditioned" to one conductor and one recording and are apt to be unduly inconsiderate of the values of another's man's artistry.

—P.H.R.

## Concerto

**ELIZALDE:** *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*; Christian Ferras with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gaston Poulet. London 10" LP LS-564, \$4.95.

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▲THIS is a fine sounding recording though its balance is not always perfect. The concerto is the work of a Manila-born composer who, while attending Cambridge University, organized an orchestra for undergraduates which specialized in dance music. After studying with de Falla and Casals, he turned his attentions to composing serious music. There is a sort of French-Spanish flavor to his concerto which is more in the style of fantasy. This is agreeably rhapsodic music, romantic in character. The violin part is full of technical difficulties. One rather resents the division of the slow movement in the recording as it tends to disrupt its mood of dreaminess. The performance is a fine one. Young Ferras, in his middle 'teens, plays with virtuosic competence and smooth tone. Poulet handles the orchestral reins competently. Ferras will be recalled for his brilliant performance of Rodrigo's *Concerto d'été* (London LL-546) which has proved and agreeable companion to the writer on several occasions since it was released. —P.H.R.

**LISZT:** *Piano Concerto in E flat; Hungarian Fantasy in E minor*; Claudio Arrau with Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia LP ML-1665, \$5.45.

▲IN SOUND, this recording matches the rich, glowing quality of the Westminster concerto release. The orchestral quality is especially gratifying, far ahead of any other LP release, while the piano tone is generally lifelike though tending to some brittleness in loud passages.

Most pianists and conductors treat the concerto as though it were simply a show piece not giving due respect to its musical qualities but not Arrau and Ormandy. Arrau achieves the requisite dramatic intensity as well as poetic feeling without stress of sentiment. Ormandy lavishes the same care he would give to a Beethoven or Mozart concerto. It is Ormandy who gives the rambling *Hungarian Fantasia* its true place in music. Based on Hungarian folk tunes, this opus requires an innate understanding of its tunes and

rhythms. While the present recording does not approach in sound prospectus that amazing 78-rpm issue of H.M.V., featuring Solomon and Suesskind, it is still a splendid LP recording. What sets it apart and above the 78 issue (which will always remain a hi-fi fan's delight is Ormandy's native understanding of the music. Solomon and Suesskind, though fine performers, were less convincing. The only LP version of this work by Kilenyi and Prohaska is not in the same class as this one, either as a performance or a recording. While Arrau is a bit dispassionate compared to Ormandy, he is technically brilliant and ingratiating in the softer passages. With Ormandy behind him shaping the music as it should be shaped, Arrau does justice to the work. —P.H.R.

**SAINT-SAENS:** *Carnival of the Animals*; Jean Antonietti and Isja Rossican (pianists), Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Walter Goehr; *Third Piano Concerto in E flat*; Pina Pozzi (pianist), the Winterthur Symphony Orchestra conducted by Victor Desarzens. Concert Hall 1179, \$5.95.

▲NOT TOO MANY are aware of the fact that Saint-Saens' 1886 *grande fantaisie zoologique* is chamber music, being scored for string quartet, added violin and bass, flute, clarinet, harmonica, xylophone and double piano. The full orchestral version, which is the only one ever heard, partially belies the intentions of the music and it is therefore good to have a performance of the work which, though it uses the full compliment of strings, observes the composer's intentions that this be an intimate and humorous work. Goehr's reading is certainly humorous enough: the turtles crawl to a very witty interpretation of the can-can music from Offenbach's *Orphée* and the elephants, with a definite muscular grace, gyrate to Berlioz's *Ballet des Sylphes*. The pianists in this performance share the conductor's sense of humor and, for once, in the famous *Pianistes* section

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the artists obey the composer's instructions to "*imiter le jeu d'un débutant et sa gaucherie*"—with very funny results. The recording, while quite acceptable, is not so good as Columbia's but, on the other hand, the performance is much better than that of Kostelanetz and the ubiquitous Noel Coward.

The *Third Concerto* is just as typical of its composer as *Le Carnaval des Animaux* is atypical. It is a long, verbose and stuffy piece of music slightly redeemed by a finale in the grand manner. Pozzi plays it in the French academic tradition and Desarzens—who gave such a fine performance of the first symphony of Mendelssohn, the composer Saint-Saëns most often resembles—shows himself very much at home in this milieu. The recording is again quite acceptable though there is some loss of quality on the final inner grooves.

—D.R.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major, Op. 44*; Margot Pinter (pianist). Radio Berlin Symphony Orchestra conducted by Arthur Rother. Urania 7081, \$5.95.

▲**TCHAIKOVSKY'S** *Second Concerto* is, to me, a much more enduring work than the first. To be sure it does not have the instantly appealing melodies of the former work, nor its obviously exploitive dialogue between soloist and orchestra, but it does have a musical integrity, a melodic richness and an imaginative emotional power which is characteristic of the best of the composer's work—from the first four symphonies to the music for *Swan Lake*.

The present performance really realizes the potentialities of the score—it is by far the best on discs. Margot Pinter plays with real brilliance yet with an oddly sensuous charm. Her work in the slow movement—finally recorded uncut—where she is joined by solo violin and cello is particularly noteworthy for its warm and very feminine charm. The recording is one of Urania's best—an excellent balance, good resonance and completely unobtrusive monitoring.

—D.R.

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## Chamber Music

**BEETHOVEN:** *Quintet in E flat, Op. 16*; L. Mittman (Piano), H. Schulman (Oboe), D. Weber (Clarinet), E. Carman (Bassoon) and F. Klein (Horn). **BEETHOVEN:** *Quartet in E flat, Op. 16*; L. Mittman (Piano), A. Eidus (Violin), D. Mankovitz (Viola), and G. Ricci (Cello). Stradivari LP STR-616, \$5.95.

▲**BEETHOVEN'S** *Opus 16* was written originally for piano and winds. Following the custom of those times the publisher had Beethoven also prepare a version that could be peddled to string players. This is the piece heard, goodness knows why, on the reverse of this disc. Students of instrumentation might be interested to compare the technical aspects of the two media; from a musical standpoint there is no competition.

It is my opinion that most people who are interested in the *Opus 16 Quintet* would have preferred another good wind piece on the reverse. The *Quintet* itself is one of the bulwarks of the standard wind repertoire. It merits the attention of all serious students of music, whether or not they are particularly attracted to music for winds.

The wind players, most of whom are alumni of the late Columbia Broadcasting Symphony, do a first-rate job on this assignment, ably assisted by Mr. Mittman. Tempi are brisk, business-like and just right. Reproduction is on a par with modern standards, making this version the recommended one. Competition in this case, however, is not especially stiff. It consists of a French effort (Vox LP 6040) featuring the Swiss pianist Frugoni.

The French style is completely out of place in an international representation of classic wind playing, nor is Frugoni's contribution more than one might expect from a gifted amateur.

—A.W.P.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Trios, Op. 9, Nos. 1 and 2*; Jean Pougnet (violin); Frederick Riddle (viola); Anthony Pini (cello); Westminster 5198, \$5.95.



▲AN EXTREMELY fine recording considerably enhances this thoughtful and completely able performance of two early works. This reading is far above that of the Bel Arte Trio but not quite on a par with that of the Pasquier group—now, unfortunately, withdrawn. All of the present performers are artists in their own right and so any fault one might find with this interpretation does not lie in individual reading. Each, however, has a definite idea of what the works should be and while, on the whole, the ensemble is completely free from the difference which marred, say, the Istomin, Schneider, Casals performances of the *Opus 1* trios, there is still lacking the complete unanimity which so distinguished the performances of the Pasquier Trio. However, as it stands, this is far and away the best performance available on LP. —D.R.

**BRAHMS:** *Sonatas for Cello and Piano in E minor, Op. 38 and in F major, Op. 99;* George Koutzen (cello) and Harriet Wingreen (piano). Classic LP 1031, \$5.95.

▲MR. KOUTZEN is really up against keen competition—that of Piatigorsky—and he does not come off with the honors. While he seems to be a very sensitive musician and occasionally shows real insight into the works at hand, he is often handicapped by lack of technique. At the beginning of the *Op. 99* sonata, for example, his pitch fluctuates in the soprano register and his attacks are not nearly those required by the music. This lack of strength might also be a general criticism of his performance. If this were the Debussy sonata, his level would be about right. But being a Brahms work, blustering and sentimental by turns, surely the only way to carry it off is to bluster right along with it. But this criticism might not be entirely fair for I more than a little suspect the recording works against Mr. Koutzen's best interests, either that or Miss Wingreen, who is apparently very strong and pounds too much. At any rate scarcely an equitable balance is achieved between the soloists. —D.R.

**DEBUSSY:** *Quartet in G minor, op. 10;* RAVEL: *Quartet in F major;* the Budapest String Quartet. Columbia LP ML 4668, \$5.45.

▲PRESUMABLY this is a re-coupling of the Budapest performances already available on two earlier discs. It is thus a belated bargain for devotees of this ensemble. The whilom splendors of the old quartet are sufficiently in evidence to justify this re-issue, and for many it will be authoritative. For my taste the Philharmonia recording of the same two works by the Stuyvesants continues to set the standard, especially in the Ravel, where the Budapesters give us the tricky cross-accent with such parlor politeness that the effect is more cloying than evocative. —J.L.

**HAYDN:** *Six Quartets, Op. 20;* Schneider Quartet. Haydn Society LPs Nos. 16, 17, 18, \$5.95 each.

▲THE RECORDING has liveness and forwardness of tonal quality with generally good balance. Though the first violin tends to dominate at times, the second violin is in the hands of an assertive player who makes the most of his melodic sequences. The performances are well rounded and musically sound with a healthy tonal aura appropriate to the music.

Haydn's *Opus 20*, quartets are known as the "Sun Quartets" because of a symbol of the rising sun on an old edition. Geiringer tells us that the features of *Opus 17* are intensified in *Opus 20*, which can mean little to anyone except a student of Haydn's development in form and style. In some ways the works are experimental. The best of the six is *No. 4*, one of the finest of Haydn's early quartets with one of his inimitable finales. *No. 3*, alas coupled to *No. 4*, is the least inspired and can hardly be more gratifying to play than it is to hear. *Nos. 1* and *2*, on one disc, are only a notch or two above *No. 3*—the first having only a finale which holds the listener's undivided attention and the second sustaining interest best in its minuet and fugal finale. *No. 5* is a rather



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**Bartók:** Contrasts for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano. *Béla Bartók, piano, Joseph Szigeti, violin, and Benny Goodman, clarinet.*

**Bartók:** Rhapsody No. 1. *Joseph Szigeti, violin, and Béla Bartók, piano.*

**Bartók:** Portrait. *Joseph Szigeti, violin, with Constant Lambert conducting the Philharmonica Orchestra.* ML 2213.

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strange opus with its brooding opening movement, its slow section suggesting the world of nature, and its serious fugal finale. No. 6 has a fine fugal finale and a sonful *Adagio*. The Pro Arte Quartet recorded only four of *Opus 20* for the H.M.V. Haydn Society issues, omitting Nos. 3 and 6. Of those earlier recordings, my own copies show more wear on Nos. 4 and 5; I never could get interested in the first two quartets but have always wanted a recording of the sixth.

—P.H.R.

**MOZART:** *Divertimento in E flat major, K. 563*; Jean Pougnet (violin); Frederick Riddle (viola); Anthony Pini (cello). Westminster WL 5191, \$5.95.

▲THIS really fine recording does full justice to the wonderful tones of Messrs. Pougnet, Riddle and Pini—all artists of the first rank. But, as is so often the case when three highly individual artists get together, their interpretation, while often stunningly beautiful, never really congeals into a complete unified effort. Although to overall intent toward ensemble is much more successful here than in the Beethoven trios reviewed above they seem, perhaps consequently, to lack the lightness and verve which this astonishing music constantly demands. This is nowhere more true than in the *andante*—the core of the work, the completely lovely so-called "Jesus Loves Me" movement, because of the resemblance the well-known hymn bears to it. Here there is a certain plodding quality which the antithesis of the light grace of the music. To be sure the present artists are far above the Bel Arte Trio and, while they suffer the same afflictions, are better than Heifetz, Primrose and Feuermann, but they do not really approach the Pasquiers in this work. There is a really definitive performance.

—D.R.

**RECORDER MUSIC OF SIX CENTURIES:** the Recorder Consort of the Musicians' Workshop; Classic LP 1018, \$5.95.

▲THIS delightful disc, the first in a proposed series, includes music from the 12th

to the 17th century. It is divided into two parts. The first is very early recorder music including a ravishing number by Machaut called *Mes Epris, Si Je Perdu Mon Amy* by des Pres, two athletic German dances by Praetorius, a splendid *Tanzlied* by von Reuenthal, some Landini as well as various anonymous *villanellas* and *stantipes* and a perfectly enchanting suite of dances by the 16th-century Tielman Suzato. Whoever realized this music did a man-sized job, not the least part being the wonderfully imaginative use of percussion, ably handled by Herbert Kellman.

The second side of the record is more expected but no less fine. It contains *icrecares* and *fantasias* by Willaert, Bassano, Lasso, Byrd, Morley, Diomedea and Gibbons, without percussion. The Recorder Consort—its members are La-Noue Davenport, Robert Dorough, Erich Katz and Bernard Krainis—is a very professional sounding group and one looks forward to further discs from them. The recording is better than many of Classic's. It is full and faithful though tending to be a bit dry.

—D.R.

**SCHUBERT:** *String Quartets, Series 5*, Nos. 1, 2, and 3; Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet. Westminster WL 5204, \$5.95.

▲THESE are very early works, written when the composer was fifteen and sixteen. But early Schubert, like early Mozart, is definitely valuable. Not only does one perceive startling intimations of the genius to come but one also is given the extreme and spontaneous beauty found in these works which someone has said, "only a boy could have written." The first quartet, in *B flat major*, is perhaps the least successful. There is some formal difficulty and octave writing is allowed. Einstein has said the work was written, so to speak, "in a state of innocence, 'before the fall'." The second, in *C major*, consists of two movements only. There is here some brilliant writing, despite a tendency to fall back too often into the tonic during the exposition. The third quartet, in *B-flat major* again, shows the young composer developing fast. Mod-

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eled on Haydn's *Quartet Op. 76, No. 2*, the feeling is much closer to Mozart, particularly in the lovely *andante*. The minuet is "rustic" with a typically Schubertian trio—then back to Haydn for a gay finale. The performance is quite good. The Konzerthaus Quartet has been steadily improving and here plays these youthful works with a dedication and comprehension that is somehow missing, say, from their earlier recording of this composer's 15th Quartet. The recording is beautiful, full, alive and wonderfully balanced. —D.R.

**SCHUBERT:** *Quartetsatz in C minor, Op. Posth.*; **WOLF:** *Italian Serenade in G*; The Koeckert String Quartet. Decca 10" LP DL-4044, \$2.50.

▲HERE we have excellent lifelike recording from Deutsche Grammophon. There is plenty of realism, even to occasional scraping of the bow on the strings. In spirit, these performances are unparalleled on LP, but tonally the Koeckert ensemble tends to roughness. But there is much to be said in favor of such animated renditions as well as for having these short works apart from others, to which they have no legitimate relationship. As LP fillers, they tend to lose their own rightful musical profile.

—P.H.R.

**R. STRAUSS:** *Serenade in E flat for Winds, Op. 7*; *Suite in B flat for Winds, Op. 4*; Vienna Philharmonic Wind Group. Westminster LP 5185, \$5.95.

▲IN these early pieces Strauss shows an amazing mastery of the field he was later to dominate and influence more than any other composer in his lifetime, the field of wind instrumentation. Historically he follows in direct line the orchestral technicians Berlioz and Wagner, a line that has been exploited to its fullest extent and from which now all originality has been squeezed by constant assault.

Melodically and harmonically these works are more reminiscent of Schumann and Spohr, with a little Brahmsian warmth for added measure. Historically they

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are of the greatest interest; musically, to be quite frank, they are a bit dull. Performances and recording are satisfactory. It is possible, however, that brisker tempi might have made them more palatable. —A.W.P.

**TANIDOS DE GUITARRAS:** Luis Maravilla (guitar). Westminster WL 5194, \$5.95.

▲IT IS about time we had more of "Maravilla," whose real name is Luis Lopez Tejera. Two years, *aficionados* will not need to be reminded, his recording of *Alegrías Y Penas De Andalucía* won the *Grand Prix du Disque* and every bit deserved it. Now he addresses himself to the music from the memorable ballets of Pilar Lopez, that astounding Spanish artist whose choreographic genius was perhaps even more pronounced than that of her sister Argentinita. Most of the pieces are by Lopez Tejera himself; also represented are Falla, Lecuona, Albeniz and Tarrega among others. In every last instance Señor "Maravilla" is faultless as to technique and style. The engineers have provided marvelous sound. Altogether a superb recording, and one which notably enhances the guitar's lengthening microgroove repertory. —J.L.

**STRAUSS:** *Sonata for Cello and Piano Op. 6*; **HINDEMITH:** *Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 11, No. 3*; Carl Stern (cello) and Perry O'Neill (piano). SPA Records LP 8, \$5.95.

▲THE REPRODUCTION in the Richard Strauss favors the cello over the piano while there is greater realism and a finer balance in the Hindemith. The Strauss work dates from 1882-83, at which time he was still a student. The influences of Schumann and Brahms are present though the work has its own personal qualities. In three movements, its slow one and its finale are more striking than the opening. Listening to this early opus which is far from dull, one realizes what Strauss might have been had he chose to pursue the classical style, a successor perhaps to Brahms and Schumann. For

in this music, one is reminded again and again of Strauss the *lieder* composer, just as Brahms in his chamber music similarly reminds us. The Hindemith opus, written in 1922, is a far more imaginative work which offers continuously adventure-some listening. It is a work that will stand up in repetition and with each re-hearing prove more revealing to those who do not turn to the score.

Mr. Stern is a fine cellist, with a lyrical quality that is generally appealing. His tone is not a large one but he can achieve requisite climatic effects without loss of quality. Mr. O'Neil is a competent partner. Stern, who has been associated with the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, is another case of talent buried in an orchestra that recording has rightfully brought to the attention of the music public at large. I shall look forward to other releases by him and his worthy partner.

—P.H.R.

## Keyboard

**BACH:** *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor; Concerto in A minor; Chorale-Preludes*; Carl Weinrich (organ). MGM LP disc E-3021, \$1.85.

▲STILL another organist seems ready to tackle the big Bach organ repertoire for LP. This time it is Carl Weinrich, the fine American keyboard artist whose prewar work for Musicraft will be remembered for its musical fidelity and all-around good taste. For this new assignment and for the others announced as coming, Weinrich is using the so-called "Praetorius" organ at Princeton University. It is an acceptable instrument, but really not in the same league with some of the German organs we have lately heard on records. Moreover, MGM seems at the moment just a shade behind the best sonic standards in their first attempt to capture an organ's speech. As for Weinrich, his work is brisk, detailed, as always a little business-like, and lacking in the warm glow some of the Leipzig Cantor's music demands. For

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these reasons, his account of the *Concerto in A minor* (based on Vivaldi) is the most consistently arresting playing we are offered. Your reporter prefers a greater feeling of grandeur in the great *Passacaglia* than Weinrich offers, and a sweet humanity that seems to be missing in some of the *Chorale-Preludes*. No one will deny, however, that *Ein' feste Burg* rings out bravely on this disc. —C.J.L.

**BACH:** *Variations on Sei gegruesst, Jesu gnetig and Five Choral Preludes*; Finn Videro (organ). Haydn Society LP disc HSL-3063, \$5.95.

▲ASIDE from some shrillness in the most brilliant of the upper partials, this disc is a distinguished engineering triumph. The organ used here is in the old monastery church of Soro, Denmark, and dates back to 1500 as far as basic construction goes. Hugely varied in sound, subtly gradated in color, this gorgeous instrument under the hands and feet of such an expert as Finn Videro makes uncommonly satisfying sounds and a full measure of music. The combination of the many splendid elements that went to make up this disc produce an arresting account of the lengthy *Variations on Sei gegruesst*, a work that usually seems a good deal less persuasive or important than its position among Bach's organ works would appear to indicate (it is the longest the Leipzig Cantor ever wrote). Also there are lovely performances of the great *Nun komm', der Heiden Heiland* and *Schmuecke dich, o liebe Seele* as well as the less interesting *Valer unser in Himmelreich*; *Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier*; and *Von Gott will ich nicht lassen*. This record is worth your attention.

—C.J.L.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Sonata No. 29 in B flat Op. 106, and No. 26 in E flat, Op. 81a*; Solomon (piano). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1733, \$5.72.

▲LACK of complete clarity and a somewhat perverse balance keeps this recording from making its full effect. There is some surface noise, too, and my copy

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had quite a few clicks and pops. These things cannot conceal, however, a most delicious performance of the *Les Adieux Sonata* and a mostly accurate but somewhat cool rendition of the thorny *Hammerklavier*. Mme. Novaes, in her year-old Vox recording, shows us how personal, how intimate the *Les Adieux* can be without falsifying its straightforward approach. Many other pianists have emphasized the work's brilliance. Solomon has taken both points of view into account in his suave, powerfully controlled presentation. This is a treasureable performance that deserves wide attention.

The same cannot really be said for Solomon's traversal of the *Hammerklavier*. His first movement lacks the requisite fullness of passion, the breadth, the swiftness this music seems to demand. Neither does his second generate much excitement. The third, the glory of this Olympian work, sounds exceeding well but misses appropriate atmosphere and the feel of inner tension. And finally, the fugue in the last movement lacks the coherence it should have if it is to make its deep mark. It is quite possible that you may never hear a completely satisfying performance of this ever-so-difficult score, and it must be said that Solomon's version is light years away from the usual account one hears. But if I had to live with a recorded performance of the *Hammerklavier*, I think that these days I would choose Gulda's on London.

—C.J.L.

**CHOPIN:** *Mazurkas*; Guiomar Novesa (piano). Vox PL 7920, \$5.95.

▲IN CHOPIN'S 55 mazurkas one finds the quintessence of the composer. As James Huneker has said, Chopin "reveals not only his nationality, but his own enigmatic and fascinating personality. Within the tremulous spaces of this miniature dance is enacted the play of the human soul, a soul that voices the revolt and sorrow of a dying race, of a dying poet." The selection of 11 dances here recorded is very representative . . . . Included are the famous *Op. 17, No. 41*; *Op. 24, Nos. 2 and 4*; *Op. 33, Nos. 2, 3, 362*

and 4; *Op. 41, No. 1*; *Op. 56, No. 2*; *Op. 59, Nos. 1 and 2*; and *Op. 63, No. 1*. The performance, by the outstanding interpreter of Chopin in our times, is flawless. Always perfect, Miss Novaes' artistry has almost never been heard to greater advantage than in this sad yet bitter, innocent yet weary music. One need only hear her reading of the familiar *Op. 17, No. 4*, in A minor, to realize what she brings to these works. Her concept is entirely fresh. There is no excessive rubato à la Horowitz; no false pathos as in the Jonas recordings. Instead we hear a simple statement of the composer's intentions coupled with a sympathy for them which is the opposite of sentimental. The same might be said of the strangely joyous, *Op. 24, No. 4*, one of the finest of all Chopin works, and the incredibly lovely *Op. 24, No. 2* in C major. This is the single definitive performance of these oddly difficult works on discs. One might wish the recording matched the performance, for every detraction from its perfection seems enormous. Actually, it is a good sound, workaday recording which does justice to Miss Novaes' thoughtful treatment of the inner voices, her extreme dynamic range and her overall command of the pianistic resources of Chopin's vocabulary.

—D.R.

**FALLA:** *Pièces Espagnoles; Rituel Fire Dance from El Amor Brujo*; **TURINA:** *Nineries*; J. M. Sanromá (piano). Polymusic LP 1011, \$5.95.

▲THERE IS plenty of atmosphere in this recording which captures a goodly share of the piano's overtones, and yet there is some tubby sound. The four Spanish pieces by de Falla—*Aragonesa, Cubana, Montanesa* and *Andaluza*, are not of the typical Spanish dance type of composition; one realizes the composer was concerned with the essence of such forms rather than their idiomatic popularity. They make for an appealing Spanish group, with the poetic *Montanesa* creating a lingering memory. Turina's set of eight pieces, dedicated to his children, is not a children's suite. It takes the accomplished fingers of a Sanromá to do justice

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to this tricky music wherein, as the annotator tells us, Turina pokes fun at Czerny and his *School of Velocity*. Here we recognize a composer whose musical basis was firm and broad, whose sense of coloration was wide in scope. Though each of the pieces except No. 6 has a definite title, the musical feeling is more atmospheric than strictly descriptive. There is elegance of style in this music, contrast and a beauty in perception as well as brilliance.

Sanroma has done nothing for the phonograph which outlines the scope of his pianistic gifts more successfully than these compositions. He plays this music to the manner born with lovely tonal variety and a technical assurance that belies its difficulties. —P.H.R.

**GRANADOS:** *Twelve Spanish Dances*; José Echaniz (piano). Westminster LP WL 5181, \$5.95.

▲IT IS a pleasant duty to welcome José Echaniz to the microgroove personality pages. He is a dedicated scholar, a seasoned technician, and perfectly cast to essay the idiom to which he was born. Westminster is due congratulations for having placed him under contract. In his adopted Rochester he is known as a pedagogue with a certain respectable virtuoso past, but this amazingly crystalline recording discloses a rare artistry indeed, and one looks forward eagerly to a rumored album of the complete piano music of Falla. The *Spanish Dances* of Granados, recently sampled in their orchestral dress by MGM, are infinitely more effective in their original keyboard setting. Senor Echaniz plays each of them with careful sympathy for their several evocations, and for all this disparity of mood he delineates the whole with a fine feeling for its characteristic charm. At long last, and let us be grateful, the neglected Hispanic repertory seems to be getting the attention it has deserved all along. —J.L.

**MOZART:** *Sonatas in B flat, K. 358* and in *D, K. 381, for Piano Four Hands*; Vitya Vronsky and Victor Babin. Columbia LP ML 4667, \$5.45.

▲LOVELY performances and excellently lifelike reproduction here, but there is strong competition from a Westminster recording which includes the *Sonata in G, K. 357* along with the two comprising this disc. Badura-Skoda and Demus tended to read the music for fun more than they interpreted it, and there is a case to be made for a modicum of informality in the four-hand repertory. On the other hand, it is not easy to inveigh against the exquisitely formal collaboration of Vronsky and Babin. For most, undoubtedly, the economy of the earlier recording will facilitate the choice. —J.L.

**SCHUMANN:** *Die Davidsbündlerlänze, Op. 6*; Joseph Battista (piano). MGM LP disc E-3011, \$4.85.

▲A PIANO recording of the utmost brilliance mirrors faithfully young Battista's debut performance for the phonograph. His work reveals well schooled fingers, a sensitive ear that tolerates no ugly sounds, and a disciplined musical mind. Battista, however, is a shade short in the kind of temperament essential in presenting effectively Schumann's poetic and ever-so-personal *Davidsbündlerlänze*. He shows a rather typical modern reticence about getting too involved personally with private passion, for fear perhaps that on close contact either he or his delicate material might get bruised. This kind of restraint is a blessing in many another work in the pianist's repertory, but it won't do for Schumann. It is difficult under any circumstance to hold the attention when presenting these 18 varyingly short pieces. The mind is too apt to wander if this music does not spring from a strong, controlled emotional center. Battista shows a great deal of promise and we shall undoubtedly be hearing from him again, but on this occasion it would seem that has not realized the mature artist's job. —C.J.L.

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# Voice

**BACH:** *Cantatas, No. 1, Wie schoen leuchtet der Morgenstern; No. 19, Es erhub sich ein streit; No. 39, Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot; No. 79, Gott der Herr ist Sonn' und Schild;* Gunthild Weber (soprano), Lore Fischer (contralto), Helmut Krebs (tenor) and Hermann Schey (basso) with the Berlin Motet Choir and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Fritz Lehmann. Decca LPs DL 9671 and 9672, \$5.85 each.

▲AS Donald McArdle points out in the liner notes, the standard numbering of Bach's cantatas does not represent chronology, but simply the order in which the works were published in the great nineteenth century Bach *Gesellschaft* edition. Thus actually *Wie schoen leuchtet der Morgenstern*, though designated *No. 1*, is not his first cantata nor even an early one: Schering dates it around 1740. Because of the beautiful and familiar hymn on which it is founded, and no less because of the seemingly endless ingenuity of the instrumentation, this is an especially appealing work, and one wonders why it has waited so long for recording. The soprano aria with obligato for oboe di caccia is too lovely a thing to pass without comment. The *Cantata 19* was intended for the feast of St. Michael and All Angels, and its opening chorus graphically depicts Michael's battle with Satan; *No. 39* was offered by Bach as part of a thanksgiving service on the First Sunday after Trinity in 1732 signaling the arrival in Leipzig of some eighteen hundred war refugees from Salzburg. With this background the text is especially touching. The *No. 79* belongs to Reformation Day, the commemoration of Martin Luther's famous manifesto with which the German Protestant movement had its beginning.

The *Cantata 19* contains one of the longest of Bach's arias, a beautiful but extremely taxing meditation for tenor,

against a chorale melody played by the obligato trumpet. Outstanding in *No. 39* is the noted soprano aria with two flutes in unison, *Hochster was ich habe*; *No. 79* contains an exciting treatment of the Chorale *Nun danket alle Gott*.

The choral singing in these records is generally of good quality, though the ideal in balance has hardly been reached. For example, in the opening chorus of *Cantata 1*, though there is good clarity in the moving parts, we could do with more of the chorale melody. The *No. 19* comes off better than in the earlier Stuttgart performance (Renaissance 34) in which the chorus was rather too far removed. The soloists here are variable, the bass singing with good authority, the ladies rather tentatively. The tenor is a definite improvement over his opposite number in the Renaissance recording, and on the whole the most impressive singer here. One might wish space had been available for the original texts with the Drinker translations on the liner.

—P.L.M.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Fidelio—Leonore's Recitative and Aria, Act I; WEBER:* *Oberon—Ocean, du Ungeheuer;* Christel Goltz (soprano) with Bavarian State Orchestra conducted by Robert Heger. Decca 10" LP 4058, \$2.50.

▲CHRISTEL GOLTZ will be recalled for her fine performance of Salome (Oceanic set 302) in which she proved her vocal accomplishments in highly difficult music. Her singing of these famous arias reveals her as a musical artist of vocal assurance though uneven tonal production.

The recording is quite realistic, but the voice is favored. I would have liked more orchestral presence though what we have is certainly competently handled by Mr. Heger.

—J.N.

**CANZONE SCORDATE** (arr. Dorums-gaard): *Seven Italian Monodies* (1609-1634); *Five Alessandro Scarlatti Songs;* *Four Sacred songs* (1629-1700); *Three C. P. E. Bach Songs;* Gerard Souzay (baritone) with Jacqueline Bonneau (piano). London LP LL-731, \$5.95.

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▲THE ARRANGER of the above songs, which the title intimates as "forgotten," has modernized his material not always to the best advantage. He writes lengthy notes which deal with the history of song but fails to tell us the titles of the Italian selections. The reproduction is excellent and need not detain us. Souza's singing is admirably artistic though tonally somewhat monotonous. Neither his Italian nor his German are truly idiomatic with the result that in the case of the fourth monody I was unable to get a lead on the text to locate its composer. The first *O miei giorni fugace* is by Peri; the third *Ferna, Dorinda mia* is by Calestani; the fifth *Och' immortali* is by Caccini; and the seventh *Cara mia cetra andiamo* is by Sigismondo d'India. The composers of the second *Poch' io non sento più* and the sixth *Ah, ingrata senza onore* I was unable to trace. The Scarlatti songs are *Chi vuol innamorarsi*; *Cara e dolce*; *Bellezza che s'ama*; *O dolcissima speranza*; *Toglietemi la vita ancor*. Most of these songs will be found in Jeppersen's collection of *La Fiora*, with which the arranger must have been familiar. The four *Sacred Songs* and the songs of Bach's son are mentioned in the text. Even with translations, which are not given, this program will hardly appeal to anyone but a specialist, though there are some lovely songs included, but Souza does not seem to me the ideal interpreter. —P.H.R.

#### A FESTIVAL OF CHORAL MUSIC:

*O vos omnes* (Victoria); *Quedito pasilo que duerme* (Hidalgo); *Campanas* (Senfl); *Duerme pequenin* (Reboud); *Ribernas* (Remacha); *Venerabil's barba capucinatorum* (Donosti); *Tres canciones y un pregon* (Anon); *El perro de aguas* (De Vital); *Husar gentil* (Matyas Seber); *Alborada* (Ledesma); *La campana* (Reboud); *Mozuca* (Do Vital); *Triste recuerdo* (Massa); *Pobre corazon* (Reboud); *Agrupacion Coral de Camera de Pamplona* conducted by Luis Morondo. Westminster LP WL 5195, \$5.95.

▲THE CHORUS here represented is made up of workers whose love for singing fills in all their off-duty hours. They  
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have done some touring, not, it seems, too far from their daily jobs, and they have sung successfully at the international contests in Wales. This program is for the most part a sampling of the music of little known Spanish composers, presented with great esprit and good humor. The singing body is proficient and well under control. The one familiar number, the great Victoria motet, is given in the long-drawn-out style generally favored for this type of music in the Latin countries.  
—P.L.M.

#### FOLK SONGS AND BALLADS:

*Come again, sweet lone doth now invite* (Dowland); *Lord Rendal*; *Greensleeves* (Old English); *He's gone away* (North Carolina); *The lonesome road* (Austin-Shilkret); *Bygone tunes* (Longone); *I'm wearin' away, John* (Foote); *Son tre mesi, che fo il soldato* (Italian folk song); *Come to the sea* (Italian folk song); *Come back to Sorrento* (de Curtis); Helen Traubel (soprano) with orchestra conducted by Robert Armbruster. Victor 10" disc LM-7013, \$4.67.

▲THIS miscellaneous program, which should certainly not be classed among the folksongs, can hardly be set down as one of Miss Traubel's best. Aside from the hodge-podge nature of the selection, this fine big round voice is simply out of its element in this type of thing. Even so moving a song as *Come again* (gaudily orchestrated) hardly makes its effect. The songs are all done in English.

—P.L.M.

GREGORIAN CHANTS; Mount Angel Seminary Gregorian Choir. Gregorian Institute of America LP MA-LP-1, \$5.95.

GREGORIAN CHANTS, Vol. II; Monks of the Benedictine Abbey, En Calcat, with Boys' Choir from L'Alumnat. Period LP 570, \$5.95.

▲ONE of the largest and oldest collections of ecclesiastical music has come down to us under the general title of Gregorian music or chant. Through the long years contributions by religious men of the day has been added to the original

codified collection for which Pope St. Gregory the Great (590-604) was responsible, and for whom this ancient music of the church was titled. There are two principal divisions of Gregorian chant—first the music of the Mass which includes that of Baptism and other occasional service, and second the music of the Daily Hours of Divine Service. All Gregorian Chant is sung in unison and therefore is monodic. It is unaccompanied and modal in feeling, being based on eight modes “which go back to ancient Greece and Jewish music.” It derives its rhythm, as the annotator says “from the supple rhythms of Latin prose.” The singing style set by the Solemn Monastery in France for Gregorian chant is followed in both these recordings. It “rules out marked dynamic changes.” The highest aspirations of religious communion were intended in the Gregorian chant, and anyone who has ever visited a monastery and heard the monks sing these ecclesiastical compositions can hardly have failed to be impressed by the aura of religious devotion in the singing group. Listening to these fine recordings from different sources, one feels that the same universal implication prevails. Both discs present music of Daily Hours of service.

The recording of the choir of Mt. Angel Abbey, Oregon, was made under the direction of the conductor, Werner Jannsen. There is a church atmosphere to the quality of sound which is clear and very natural. The singing is exceptionally beautiful and the blending of the forty voices of the youthful seminarians offers perfect unison blend. The singing of the French group is also smooth and tonally pleasing with the Boys' Choir adding a treble sound that suggests an unworldly innocence. This latter disc was given the Grand Prix du Disque in 1952 in France. The first record is deserving of similar recognition of merit in this country. The texts with translations are supplied with the latter only. —P.H.R.

**HAYDN:** *Die Jahreszeiten* (The Seasons); RIAS Symphony Orchestra, Berlin, RIAS Chamber Choir and Choir of St. Hedwig's Cathedral, conducted by

Ferenc Fricsay, Elfride Troetschel (soprano), Walther Ludwig (tenor), Josef Greindl (bass). Decca LP set DX-123, 2 discs, \$11.70.

▲**ORATORIO** is not as popular as it formerly was, and though Haydn's *The Seasons* comes in the category of the oratorio it is a work that almost refutes that implication. Haydn was 67 when he wrote it, fearful of his health and, as Tovey says, “his pessimism about *The Seasons* no doubt had its physical causes.” Yet the overall greatness of this work offsets its weaknesses upon which Haydn repeatedly remarked. These were forced upon him as the text demanded imitation of frogs, bird calls and other obvious effects from nature. Haydn's love of nature, his universal grasp of its significance, enlisting ever his rejoicing in the goodness of God, were just reasons, however, for his setting of Baron van Swieten's hardly masterful text. The significance of this work, so vastly different from Vivaldi's earlier innocent word-painting of Nature in his *The Seasons*, is unjustly lost to sight by its neglect in the concert halls of today. As Irving Kolodin says in his excellent notes, “as familiarity with the score grows, one comprehends that Haydn, in his late 60's, was reviewing not only the eternal cycle of the physical seasons, but also the cycle of human life, from childhood to youth to maturity and old age.”

In April 1951 Mr. Miller, reviewing the Haydn Society issue, remarked on the text being a thorn in the side of the score. The German text is based on a once famous poem by James Thompson, which retranslated into English bears little resemblance to the original Thompson. In my estimation, the work is best served in the German, and since Decca has given us the complete text, both German and English, the listener is well served. Of the three performances on LP (the Cetra is abbreviated) none is completely satisfactory. Fricsay is admirably forthright but not imaginatively penetrating. Troetschel is a lovely Hanne—warmer-toned than Gatti and more

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youthful in sound than Eipperle; Walter Ludwig a pleasing Lukas; and Greindl a disappointing Simon after Hann. The choral singing is well balanced and the choral singing is well balanced and tonally appealing. The recording from Deutsche Grammophon is clear and bright in sound with an atmospheric effect that suggests the out-of-doors. —J.N.

**OLD ITALIAN AIRS:** *Se venite a consiglio, o pensieri* (Scarlatti); *Pur dicesti, o bocca bella* (Lotti); *Vergine, tutto amor* (Durante); *Ah se tu dormi ancora* (Bassani); *Sebben, crudele* (Caldara); *Intorno all'idio mio* (Cesti); *Caro mio ben* (Giordano); *Sento nel core—certo dolore* (Scarlatti); *O del mio dolce ardor* (Gluck); *Lasciar d'amarti per non penar* (Gasparini); *Che fiero costume* (Legrenzi); *Tre giorni son che Nina* (Pergolesi); *Vittoria, mio core* (Carissimi); *Giacinto* Prandelli (tenor) with Dick Marzollo (piano). Vox LP PL-7930, \$5.95.

**OLD ITALIAN SONGS AND AIRS:** *Un certo non se che* (Vivaldi); *Piangete, ohimè* (Carissimi); *Rinaldo — Lascia ch'io pianga* (Handel); *Affè! Affè! mi fateridere* (Cavalli); *Se tu m'ami* (Pergolesi); *Nel cor piu non mi sento* (Paisiello); *Lasciatemi morire — Lamento d'Arianna* (Monteverdi); *Come raggio di sol* (Caldara); *Aria from Demofrone* (Cherubini); *Le Violette* (Scarlatti); *Quella fiamma che m'accende* (Marcello); *Chi vuol la zingarella* (Paisiello); Fedora Barbieri (mezzo-soprano) with Dick Marzollo (piano). Vox LP PL-7980, \$5.95.

▲THE ITALIANS have a wonderful heritage in the *arie antiche* which comes down from the 17th and 18th centuries—a period of true *bel canto* art. There are not many modern singers who can do justice to these old airs which require a purity of tone and a smooth vocal line. My criticism of these singers is tempered with my admiration for their efforts to make more widely known some of the lovely airs of olden times. Prandelli is more successful in his program than is Mme. Barbieri. She carries over faults from operatic singing and is unable to

color her voice or achieve requisite *pianissimi*. She was unwise to chose the Handel and Monteverdi arias as in these she can neither efface nor approach the interpretations of so many others on records. Despite his often throaty production the tenor can, and often does, color his tones and graduate his dynamics. Moreover, as he has shown in the theatre, he can maintain a smooth vocal line. The recording of both recitals has been capably managed with an equitable balance between singers and pianists. The microphone technique employed is kinder to Mr. Prandelli's voice. It is unfortunate no translations of the airs are provided. —P.H.R.

**SCHOENBERG:** *A Survivor from Warsaw, Op. 46*; *Kol Nidre, Op. 39*; Hans Jaray (narrator), Vienna Symphony Orchestra and Academy Chamber Chorus conducted by Hans Swarowsky; *Chamber Symphony No. 2*; Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Herbert Haefner. Columbia ML 4664, \$5.45.

**SCHOENBERG:** *Songs, Op. 2, Op. 3, Op. 6 and Op. 14*; Ilona Steingruber (soprano); Herbert Haefner (piano). SPA 32, \$5.95.

▲IN 1946 Schoenberg wrote both words and music for a cantata, *A Survivor from Warsaw*, dealing with the sufferings of the Jews under the Nazi occupation of the capital of Poland. One might have expected something striking from the composer given this material but, instead, one must admit this work seems loaded with radio and movie clichés of the most obvious variety and that the music, far from contributing to the text seems barely to support it. The 1938 *Kol Nidre* is along the same lines although here the music is handled less melodramatically and serves as a sober illustration of the creation of the world. Both works, while not quite tuneful, are highly listenable. It is just that, like the *Ode to Napoleon*, they do not seem either original nor consistent with the talent that gave us the later quartets and the 1946 *Trio*. Hans Jaray, who narrates in English, may or may not be using *Sprechgesang*—

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I don't have the score—but, at any rate, his interpretation is straight 1925 "expressionist" and I find it repelling. The orchestra, direction and choir seem first-rate. The 1939 *Chamber Symphony* is actually a companion to the 1906 *Chamber Symphony*, having been almost entirely written at that time. Consequently it has all the strengths and weaknesses of the former work. I find both symphonies inconsequential when compared with Schoenberg's later achievements. They are tuneful, workmanlike and seems to have nothing to say. The performance is tonally quite splendid and all three works are considerably aided by a really fine recording.

The songs are all early. Both op. 2 and op. 3 were written before *Verklärte Nacht*. The eight songs of opus 6 sound very Straussian and show the influences of the composer's *Pelleas und Melisande* completed the year before. The two extremely lovely Opus 14 songs, written just a year before the fine cycle, *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, show the beginnings of the more mature style. All of these are sung with consummate artistry by Miss Steingruber, whose vocal purity adds a welcome restraint to the often highly emotional early songs. Mr. Haefner proves himself as able an accompanist as he is a conductor. The recording is extremely good, particularly in regards to balance between the two artists.

—D.R.

## Sacred Works by Handel

(Continued from page 346)

The performances are full-blooded and honest, quite adequate to carry to us the majesty and impressiveness of the music, yet not free from the kind of fault that might have been prevented. First, the soloists might have been coached in the English language—taking the average they are neither correct nor consistent. Some times, for example, they say "the hart" in the accepted manner, sometimes they make it "thee hart." The soprano is the best in this and in other respects, the rather thin-voiced tenor the least

satisfactory. The chorus sings with considerable enthusiasm, though the balance is not perfect and the tone of the tenors leaves something to be desired. The reproduction is uneven in that the soloists are closer to us than the chorus.

—P.L.M.

## What Price Old Records

(Continued from page 338)

mum prices, but this would of course revealed his hand. Some of us have sold antiques to traders for small remuneration and learned later of fabulous prices that the dealer acquired for several items with which we parted. The dealer in old records, like the dealer in antiques, cannot pay fabulous prices for one or two choice items. More often than not when he buys a collection, ninety per cent of it will not be easy to dispose of even at low prices.

Meantime, looking over Mr. Moses' *Guide*, the reader might like to know of some rare items. Who knows—some reader may have some of these in an attic or stored away in an old bookcase. If some previous member of your family was lucky enough to acquire some early Columbia discs by Edouard De Reszke, the basso brother of the more famous tenor Jean, these are worth \$150 each today. The early Columbias of Antonio Scotti are valued at \$40, and those by Suzanne Adams at \$35. Early Carusos are not worth as much as many think they are, but good copies of some of his early records can command prices from \$5 to \$11. Some early Victors by the baritone Campanari are worth \$35 each, and five early Victor releases of Zélie DeLassan are worth \$40 each. There are a couple of early Columbia records by the actor Jefferson which are worth \$25 each. Looking down the lists of singers, we were amazed to find many of their recordings for which we would not have spent fifty cents in the past, now valued anywhere from \$5 to \$10. You never can tell what values the public at large will place on antiques.

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# WESTMINSTER NEWS

1953

## WESTMINSTER WINS 5 AWARDS

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MAHLER:

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### AUDIO ENGINEERING AWARD FOR THE BEST FOLK MUSIC RECORDING

LOPEZ TEJERA:

Jays and Sorrows of Andalusia WL 5135

### GRAND PRIX DU DISQUE AWARD FOR

PROKOFIEFF:

Lt. Kije Suite, Op. 60—Scythian Suite, Op. 20, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Hermann Scherchen, conductor. WL 5091

### DOWNBEAT AWARD FOR BEST VOCAL RECORDING

Italian Songs. Magda Lasslo, soprano. WL 5119

### DOWNBEAT AWARD FOR BEST PIANO RECORDING

SCHUBERT:

Four Impromptus, Op. 90—Four Impromptus, Op. 120—Sonata in A Major, Op. 120 WL 205

### FAVORITE HI FI RECORDINGS AS FEATURED IN LIFE MAGAZINE

GLIERE:

Red Poppy Ballet

WL 210

RESPIGHI:

Pines of Rome

WL 5167

HAYDN:

Military Symphony

WL 5045

PROKOFIEV:

Lieut. Kije

WL 5091

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV:

Piano Concerto

WL 5068

SCHUBERT:

Trout Quintet

WL 5025

## AUGUST RELEASES 1953

BEETHOVEN:

String Quartet in B Flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6. Barylli Quartet. String Quintet in D Major, Op. 29. Barylli Quartet. Wilhelm Huebner—Violin. WL 5212

MOZART:

Divertimento No. 4 in B Flat Major K. ANH 229, Divertimento No. 5 in B Flat Major K. ANH 229, Divertimento No. 1 in B Flat Major K. ANH 229. Leopold Wlach—First Clarinet, Franz Bartosek—Second Clarinet, Karl Oehlberger—Bassoon. WL 5213

TELEMANN:

Sonata in C Minor

PEPUSCH:

Sonata in F Major

Lois Wann—Oboe, Alfred Mann—Recorder, Edith Weiss Mann—Harpisichord

TELEMANN:

Sonata in E Minor

A. SCARLATTI:

Sonata in F Major

Lois Wann—Oboe, Alfred Mann—Recorder, Albert Mell—Violin, Edith Weiss Mann—Harpisichord. WL 5214

HEINRICH ISAAC:

Missa Carminum. Wiener Akademie Kammerchor, Conducted by Ferdinand Grossman. WL 5212

Galops, Polkas and Polpauris. "Deutschemeister" Band, Conducted by Julius Herrmann WL 3007

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